

*Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010*

**Remarks at the Opening Session of the Nuclear Security Summit**  
*April 13, 2010*

*President Obama.* Good morning, everybody. I'd like to get started. Let me begin by thanking all of you for your participation last night. I thought it was a very important discussion.

Before I begin, I want to take this moment once again to acknowledge the terrible tragedy that struck the Polish people this weekend. We are joined today by a distinguished delegation from Poland, led by Ambassador Kupiecki. Mr. Ambassador, all of us were shocked and deeply saddened by the devastating loss of President Kaczynski, the First Lady, and so many distinguished civilian and military leaders from your country. And this was a loss not just for Poland, but for the world.

As a close friend and ally, the United States stands with Poland and Poles everywhere in these very difficult days. As an international community, I know that we will all rally around the Polish people, who have shown extraordinary strength and resilience throughout their history. So our hearts go out to your people. Our thoughts and prayers are with them. We join them in this time of mourning. And so if everybody is agreeable, I would like to ask for a moment of silence to show that solidarity and to honor those who were lost.

*[At this point, a moment of silence was observed.]*

Thank you. It is my privilege to welcome you to Washington and to formally convene this historic summit. We represent 47 nations from every region of the world, and I thank each of you for being here. This is an unprecedented gathering to address an unprecedented threat.

Two decades after the end of the cold war, we face a cruel irony of history: The risk of a nuclear confrontation between nations has gone down, but the risk of nuclear attack has gone up. Nuclear materials that could be sold or stolen and fashioned into a nuclear weapon exist in dozens of nations. Just the smallest amount of plutonium—about the size of an apple—could kill and injure hundreds of thousands of innocent people. Terrorist networks such as Al Qaida have tried to acquire the material for a nuclear weapon, and if they ever succeeded, they would surely use it. Were they to do so, it would be a catastrophe for the world, causing extraordinary loss of life and striking a major blow to global peace and stability.

In short, it is increasingly clear that the danger of nuclear terrorism is one of the greatest threats to global security, to our collective security.

And that's why 1 year ago today in—1 year ago in Prague, I called for a new international effort to secure all vulnerable nuclear materials around the world in 4 years. This is one part of a broader, comprehensive agenda that the United States is pursuing, including reducing our nuclear arsenal and stopping the spread of nuclear weapons, an agenda that will bring us closer to our ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

Over the past year, we've made progress. At the United Nations Security Council last fall, we unanimously passed Resolution 1887 endorsing this comprehensive agenda, including the goal of securing all nuclear materials. Last night, in closed session, I believe we made further progress, pursuing a shared understanding of the grave threat to our people.

And today we have the opportunity to take the next steps. We have the opportunity, as individual nations, to take specific and concrete actions to secure the nuclear materials in our countries and to prevent illicit trafficking and smuggling. That will be our focus this morning.

We have the opportunity to strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency, the IAEA, with the resources and authorities it needs to meet its responsibilities. That will be our focus at our working lunch.

And we have the opportunity, as an international community, to deepen our cooperation and to strengthen the institutions and partnerships that help prevent nuclear materials from ever falling into the hands of terrorists. And that will be our focus this afternoon.

And we have the opportunity, as partners, to ensure that our progress is not a fleeting moment, but part of a serious and sustained effort. And that's why I am so pleased to announce that President Lee has agreed to host the next nuclear security summit in the Republic of Korea in 2 years. This reflects South Korea's leadership, regionally and globally, and I thank President Lee and the South Korean people for their willingness to accept this responsibility.

I'd ask President Lee just to say a few words.

*President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea.* Thank you, President Obama, for inviting me to this historic summit, and thank you for all calling us, for supporting Korea to host next summit in 2012. I assure you I will do best to make this summit a success. So I hope to see all of you in Korea. Thank you.

*President Obama.* Thank you very much.

So today is an opportunity not simply to talk, but to act; not simply to make pledges, but to make real progress on the security of our people. All this, in turn, requires something else, which is something more fundamental. It will require a new mindset, that we summon the will, as nations and as partners, to do what this moment in history demands.

I believe strongly that the problems of the 21st century cannot be solved by any one nation acting in isolation. They must be solved by all of us coming together.

At the dawn of the nuclear age that he helped to unleash, Albert Einstein said: "Now everything has changed . . ." And he warned: "We are drifting towards a catastrophe beyond comparison. We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive."

That truth endures today. For the sake of our common security, for the sake of our survival, we cannot drift. We need a new manner of thinking and action, and that is the challenge before us. And I thank all of you for being here to confront that challenge together, in partnership.

And with that, I'm going to ask that we take a few moments to allow the press to exit before our first session.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:45 a.m. at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Poland's Ambassador to the U.S. Robert Kupiecki; and former President Lech Kaczynski of Poland and his wife Maria Kaczynska, who died in a plane crash in Smolensk, Russia, on April 10. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Global Nuclear Security Summit, opening session.

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